

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Analyze themes
- Identify recurring themes
- Identify universal themes
- Compare and contrast themes

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 101
- **Teaching Model**, “The Ant and the Dove” and “If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking,” p. 102
- **Practice Model**, “Home, Sweet Home” and “Home and Love,” p. 103
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 105–106
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 107

Teach

1. **Theme:** Distribute the **Lesson Summary** and preview the **Academic Vocabulary**. Point out that a literary work can often have more than one theme. Usually however, there is only one “major” message. Others are minor themes.
2. **Teaching Theme:** Review the **Here's How** steps on the **Lesson Summary**.
 - **Subject:** Note that the subject and the theme are not identical. The subject can be identified with just a word or two: *war*, *friendship*, *growing up*. The theme is an insight or idea *about* the subject. It should be expressed in a sentence.
 - **Stated Themes:** Stress that most themes in literary works are implied. Stated themes can be found in fables, presented as morals, and in nonfiction works such as essays, usually at the end of the text.
 - **Implied Themes:** Emphasize that it is usually up to the reader to infer the theme. Methods of doing so will vary by genre. Readers must use details in the text to answer the question “What idea about the subject is the writer trying to convey?”
 - **A Theme Statement:** Point out that this statement should not summarize or name characters and events. Themes are generalizations about life or human nature. *Love made Samuel ignore Letitia's faults* is too specific, for example. *Love is blind*, however, applies to human emotions in general. After expressing the theme in a sentence, students should check that their theme statement is consistent with the elements in the selection.
 - **Comparing and Contrasting:** Point out that similar themes can be found in different texts. Themes of different works can be compared both within genres, time periods, and cultures, and across those categories. Help students understand the difference between **recurring** and **universal** themes. **Recurring themes** are common to a particular time and place; for example, works by American writers about the Industrial Revolution might have certain messages. **Universal themes** recur in works from very different times and cultures.
3. **Guided Practice:** Pass out copies of the **Teaching Model**, “The Ant and the Dove” and “If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking.” Have students note the place and time period from which each work originates.

THEME, CONTINUED

- Have students read the first selection. Ask students to identify the subject (*helping others*) and stated theme (*One good turn deserves another*). Remind students that an explicit moral is common in fables but unusual in other types of literary works.
- Have students read the second selection and identify the subject. (*helping others overcome problems*) Focus their attention on the repeated line “I shall not live in vain.” Ask students to express the theme in a sentence. (*Helping others makes life worth living.*)
- Finally, compare and contrast the themes in the two works. Note that the themes both express the importance of helping others. Note the differences: In Aesop's fable, helping others results in receiving help; in Dickinson's poem, helping others is a goal by itself. Both express messages about human behavior that can be found in works and genres from different cultures and places.

QUICK CHECK. Ask students to provide examples of films or books with the theme of helping others. Then have them express the theme of each work in a sentence.

Practice and Apply

Activities involving theme appear on pp. 105–106.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. a 5. a

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet B

1. *Unlike others, the speaker takes no pleasure in it.*
2. *The speaker describes it as a sweet refuge, the place filled with love and happiness.*
3. *Both describe it as a place sweeter than any other.*
4. *Nothing is finer than a home filled with love.*
5. *Universal, because the value of a loving home is a subject that can be appreciated and shared by people of all cultures in all time periods.*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should answer at least four of the five items correctly.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should be able to write a correct and coherent theme statement for at least three of items 1-4, and answer item 5 correctly.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Academic Vocabulary** and the **Here's How** steps using the **Practice Model**, then assign the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 107.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. b 2. b 3. a 4. *Sample answer: Love is an unstoppable emotion.* 5. *Sample answer: This theme is universal because it relates to people from all time periods and cultures. It is just as applicable today as it was in 8th-century Japan.*